

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 31, 2003

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NO. KOREA MOVES NUCLEAR FUEL RODS OUT OF STORAGE

Markey calls on Bush Administration to immediately initiate crisis-ending dialogue

Washington, DC: Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), a senior Member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee and co-chairman of the Bipartisan Task Force on Nonproliferation, today released the following statement in response to press reports regarding North Korea's transport of nuclear fuel rods out of storage:

"Press reports in today's New York Times indicate that North Korea appears to be moving its stockpile of plutonium-containing fuel rods out of storage. These fuel rods, combined with already separated fuel rods, contain enough plutonium to make six or more nuclear bombs.

"We have known for some time that North Korea has an illegal covert uranium enrichment plant. We have known since 1994 where North Korea's plutonium was. The Bush Administration's failure to articulate a clear and coherent response North Korea's actions by going to the UN Security Council last fall and seeking approval of a resolution condemning North Korea for its violations of international law and imposing sanctions has allowed this crisis to escalate out of control. It has led only to the expulsion of International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors and the removal of monitoring equipment. Without the restraint imposed by those inspectors, North Korea seems to have moved its nuclear fuel rods for only one purpose: to extract the plutonium contained within them and to begin construction of nuclear bombs.

"The Bush Administration needs to rethink its policy North Korea policy. As a first step, the Administration needs to announce that it will henceforth oppose any effort to transfer two light water reactors to North Korea. In addition, the Bush Administration needs to engage the rest of the world in this crisis by working with the United Nations Security Council to pass a resolution condemning North Korea for its actions and demanding the return of IAEA inspectors.

"North Korea simply must not be allowed to develop nuclear bombs, and the Bush Administration must work quickly to resolve this crisis."

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